

-: BLACK CORN :-

Atanu Mahanty; M.sc (Agriculture); IAS, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, W.B; Department of Agronomy.

Black Aztec is an **heirloom** corn variety recognized for its mature deep-purple to black kernels. This corn is best enjoyed fresh when it is young and still white. When ground, the mature dark kernels produce a **colored cornmeal** useful in cooking. Black Aztec corn grows best in **temperate as well as warm climates** with moderate to high amounts of rainfall. Black corn grows on stalks that reach up to **3 meters** in height. Black corn produces long, slender cobs around **20 centimeters** in length, and is considered a medium-sized variety. Depending on the variety, the kernels may be white when young, only developing their dark color as they mature. Black corn does stain, and even removing the husks dyes your fingers purple. Black corn is chewy and starchy. It produces what is called "**old fashioned**" sweetness, meaning that although it is sweet, it is not as sugary as modern varieties of yellow corn.



Black corn is an heirloom variety, and is botanically classified as **Zea mays**, the same species the yellow corn. In Peru, Black corn is also known as **Maiz Morado**, while in the United States and the United Kingdom, it may be referred to as **Black Aztec corn** or Black Mexican corn. Outside of South America, Black corn is not found commonly in supermarkets, and only occasionally in farmer's markets. It is popular for its striking color, which also makes it popular as an ornamental.

Black corn contains **anthocyanins**, a plant pigment that is known to have **anti-inflammatory** and **antioxidant** benefits. Black corn contains essential nutrients such as **iron, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, magnesium, folate, phosphorus, and vitamin A**. Black corn is good grilled, roasted, boiled and steamed. A simple combination of butter, salt and pepper enhances its flavor. Black corn is a versatile vegetable that may use in place of yellow corn. Black corn may also be ground into cornmeal and used for cornbread, tortillas, and Indian

roti breads. Black corn should be stored in the refrigerator with its husks on. Black corn is boiled and used to a summer drink called **chicha morada**, which is popular in **Peru**. It is also used to make a fermented, alcoholic beverage called masato. Black corn features in folklore of the South Americas, and is listed when the red and blue varieties are mentioned. The Pueblo Indians may have used Black corn in their ceremonial costumes, and also refer to a **Black Corn Maiden** in their myths.



The exact origins of Black corn are unclear, nevertheless it is an ancient variety grown by the **Aztecs** over **2,000** years ago, and used since ancient times in areas throughout **South America**, notably **Peru**. It is still considered to be a relatively uncommon variety outside of South America.

Black Aztec corn is a **warm-season vegetable**, meaning it requires warm temperatures to germinate and grow. Plant Black Aztec corn when soil temperatures are at least **55 degrees** Fahrenheit after the last frost date. Full sun and well-draining, rich soil are a must for this crop.

"**Xin Jun He Anthocyanin Black Sweet 1** is a variety of sweet black corn with natural **anthocyanins**. In the past few years, it has been produced all over **China**. During the harvest, its seeds are a **red-purple** color. After they are boiled, their color becomes even better. In China, the majority of farmers are producing the general black corn breeds, and their production is only small. "Xin Jun He Anthocyanin Black Sweet 1", on the other hand, is a crossbreed. It has a large production, and a sweet taste. They usually take **85 to 90** days to ripen, and another **115 days** to dry."

Being a good source of antioxidant **carotenoids**, such as **lutein** and **zeaxanthin**, yellow (or colored) corn may promote **eye health**. ... For this reason, moderate consumption of whole-grain corn, such as popcorn or sweet corn, may well fit into a healthy diet. Antioxidant activity (AA) of black maize kernels attributed mainly to polyphenols has potential effects on health and possible defense functions against pests.